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WASHINGTON, DC—U.S. Rep. Peter DeFazio (D-Springfield) today joined Rep. Dan Lungren (R-CA) and Rep. Jane Harman (D-CA) at a press conference announcing the introduction of the SAFE Port Act, comprehensive legislation that will improve the security of our nation's ports. DeFazio serves on the Economic Security, Infrastructure Protection and Cybersecurity Subcommittee which is scheduled to hold a hearing on the bill on Thursday.

Even before the prospect of the Dubai Ports acquisition brought the issue of port security to the forefront, dangerous vulnerabilities existed in our global supply chain, reaching far beyond the shores of our Nation's seaports. The maritime transport system is vulnerable to attack and exploitation by terrorists. United States shores should be our last line of defense.

"I think most Americans would be shocked to learn that almost 5 years after 9/11, we're still protecting our ports with an honor system, instead of security, certainty and good intelligence. Each shipper is asked to send us an invoice which discloses what they're shipping and only a tiny percentage of containers are well secured and actually inspected. It's not very likely that a terrorist would voluntarily disclose that they are shipping 199 concrete bird-feeders and a nuclear bomb," DeFazio said.

We know that Al'Qaeda has targeted our ports for attack in order to inflict massive economic losses on the US and its allies. We can and must do better. "I'm proud to have worked with Chairman Lungren on the SAFE Ports Act. This legislation will create a chain of custody for goods and containers coming to the United States that will be much more likely to prevent terrorists from shipping either themselves or weapons to our shores," DeFazio said.

The following are the main provisions of the SAFE Ports Act:

- Directs the Secretary of Homeland Security to develop a strategy for cargo and maritime security including a timeline, and a plan for the resumption of trade in the event of an attack.

- Establish a Director of Cargo Security Policy at DHS to coordinate supply chain programs throughout the department.

- Establish minimum security standards for all cargo containers entering the U.S.
- Create a dedicated stream of funding for port security grants.
- Authorize the Container Security Initiative (CSI) and the Customs-Trade Partnership Against Terrorism (C-TPAT).
- Establish joint operations centers in the U.S. to ensure a coordinated approach and response in the event of a threat or attack.
- Focus on research and development efforts to improve maritime and cargo security.
- Check the names of all employees in secure port areas against terrorist watch lists.
- Create third tier of the C-TPAT program called GreenLane, comprised of participants who exceed minimum standards.